DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 003 IR 055 407

AUTHOR Jordan, Sonja K.
TITLE Preservation Activities in Bulgaria: The State of Affairs and Possibilities for Cooperation. Report of a Visit to Bulgaria, March 1 to 20, 1994.
INSTITUTION Commission on Preservation and Access, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Feb 95
NOTE 15p.; For the introduction to the series, see IR 055 406.
AVAILABLE FROM Commission on Preservation and Access, 1400 16th Street, N.W., Suite 740, Washington, DC 20036-2217 ($10; orders must be prepaid in U.S. funds).
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Background; Centralization; Decentralization; Economics; Foreign Countries; History; *Library Collections; *Library Development; Library Education; Library Networks; Library Statistics; Political Issues; *Preservation; *Problems; *Research Libraries
IDENTIFIERS *Bulgaria; National Preservation Program (Bulgaria)

ABSTRACT

This report provides a review of Bulgaria's history as it relates to library collections, and describes the current state of preservation activities at key institutions. The discussion includes: the political history of Bulgaria and its library collections; the Soviet state and its aftermath; economic constraints; decentralization of Bulgaria's research libraries; and a description of and statistics for five specific key research libraries. It was discovered that although Bulgaria's government cannot make preservation a priority at this time, the libraries are free to initiate their own projects and collaborations. Bulgarian libraries suffer from inexperience in democracy, priority setting, management, and implementation, but are receptive to reorganization at all levels, and ready for reform, modernization, and leadership. The issue of decentralization and centralized library programs is complicated, but the past three years suggest that decentralization would be detrimental to progress and advancement. The most significant problems are: a lag in development of libraries and the profession; gaps and uneven levels of knowledge and expertise within the profession; nonexistent material resources; and lack of English-speaking librarians to absorb available information. Recommendations are made for the reintroduction of a national preservation program. (MAS)

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IR055407

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Sonja K. Jordan, Head of Preservation
University of Notre Dame

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Published by
The Commission on Preservation and Access
1400 16th Street, NW Suite 740
Washington, DC 20036-2217

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This paper has been submitted to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources.

The paper in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences-Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials ANSI Z39.48-1992.

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Preservation Activities in Bulgaria

COMMISSION PREFACE

Two objectives of the Commission's International Program are to encourage international cooperation for maximum use of financial resources and to stimulate preservation activities in less well developed countries. In March 1994, the Commission contracted with Sonja K. Jordan, Head of Preservation, University of Notre Dame, to assess the possibility of linking preservation and access activities in Bulgaria with similar efforts in the United States and Western Europe. In her visit to that country, Jordan gathered information on the physical state of library collections and extent of preservation activities, examined the political and economic climate and the importance given to preservation, and identified institutions and organizations engaged or interested in preservation.

The following report includes Jordan's review of Bulgaria's history as it relates to library collections and descriptions of the current state of preservation activities at key institutions. The report concludes with Jordan's general observations on her findings and a list of directions for the future identified by Bulgarian libraries.

Mankind is embarking upon the age of the information society. Information has become a strategic resource and an object of state policy. It underlies progress in science, education, culture and economic life. World experience has shown that, when different countries seek ways out of crises, they devote extreme attention to the development of libraries and to the implementation of new information technologies. Bulgaria is facing such issues today.

— Ministry of Culture Open Society Fund — Sofia, Bulgaria. Preface to *Building and Development of a National Library Information Network (NALIN) 1993 Draft (p. 4).*

POLITICAL HISTORY AND LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

In a country that has been isolated for over 50 years, the recent collapse of Bulgaria's political regime has provided access to the rich scholarly tradition of the country's libraries, a tradition steeped in centuries of Bulgarian culture.

Bulgaria's history stretches back to its occupation by Thracian Greeks in seventh and sixth centuries B.C. Called the "Gates of the Peoples," Bulgaria's boundaries served not only as a gateway for invasion, but also for the transmission of culture and learning. From Bulgaria's civilized beginnings its libraries have been its intellectual storehouse, with libraries as Bulgaria's oldest cultural institutions.

Although originally associated with monasteries, by the ninth century libraries were the center for culture and learning; by the tenth they conveyed this culture to Russia. Then, during the Ottoman occupation from 1393 to 1896, many of the monasteries closed. Monks taking refuge in the neighboring countries of Serbia, Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Ukraine took with them not only manuscripts, but also literary and scholarly traditions. In the later years of the Ottoman occupation, around 1839, libraries known as reading rooms opened in remote villages.

Saints Cyril & Methodius National Library, Sofia. Early printed Bulgarian imprints.

After four centuries of Ottoman occupation, Bulgaria was liberated by the Russians in 1878. Ottoman domination had delayed the development of both a national literature and a print culture. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought an interest in national literature as schools and learned societies were established. In 1876, printing and publishing finally came to Bulgaria, but only after U.S. and British intellectuals had influenced Bulgaria's educational and library systems. It is for this reason that the Bulgarian literary and scholarly corpus lasted as a manuscript tradition well into the nineteenth century.

Bulgarian political history has influenced a unique distribution of collections among its libraries. Theological collections are mostly to be found in the monastic libraries and some private libraries, whereas literary works are collected in small, remote village libraries, and scholarly and research materials are found in institutions and organizations. When the Soviet state was created, however, these distinctions were all but eliminated by Soviet propaganda mandating acquisitions policies for all libraries. Theological and Western literatures were prohibited.

Moreover, because universities and their libraries came late to Bulgaria, the country's great research collections are housed in national, and not academic, libraries. Of the universities all but one have been established since 1960, with only 30 universities currently in existence. The oldest and largest academic library, the University Library at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, was founded in 1888 and is one of six central research libraries in Bulgaria. This unusual library history raises interesting questions about identifying singular and significant collections throughout the country, a necessary strategy for preservation initiatives. To achieve this requires focusing on the collections at the monastic libraries, the National Library, the Academy of Sciences, and the distinctive manuscript collections throughout Bulgaria.

THE SOVIET STATE AND ITS AFTERMATH

The period between Bulgaria's liberation from Ottoman occupation and the creation of the Soviet state was very brief, a matter of 65 years. With the creation of the Soviet state, the Russian government envisioned the model of a unified library system to be administered by the Ministry of Culture through two councils: the Board of Directors of the Central Scientific Libraries, and the Board of Directors of the District Libraries. The libraries were to be united philosophically and practically through the Methodological Plan, a political strategy designed to indoctrinate a people and a culture to the new social order. The National Library was charged with coordinating and implementing the plan, as well as with articulating a policy governing the organization, structure, and mission for all libraries. Every core function of a library was spelled out: how to classify and organize collections; how to construct bibliographic descriptions; and what items to collect or weed.

In 1989, Soviet rule in Bulgaria ended by means of a peaceful revolution, and Jelu Jeliv was elected to office as Bulgaria's new president. The Old Communist Party, now known as the Bulgarian Socialists Party (BSP), still represents the largest voting block in Parliament but has split into five or six different factions over the issue of executive power. The new party, the United Democratic People's Party (UDP), consists of 20 to 30 interest groups characterized as young, inexperienced, corrupt, and incohesive. Both the UDP and the BSP have representatives elected to Parliament. The country is run by a President, a Prime Minister, a Parliament of 250 seats, a cabinet, and a number of ministries. The number of factions and the absence of a tradition of cooperation and social programs means that no political consensus, administrative strategy, or set of priorities have evolved from the new regime. The members of Parliament do not support the cabinet, and the legislature is not unified. Even if laws and/or statutes could be ratified, no mechanism exists to enforce them.

Finally, the legal status of libraries is not clear in the current situation. The executive power in Bulgaria is the responsibility of the government through the Council of Ministers. The next tier is comprised of the regional councils which perform coordinating functions in the administration. The third tier consists of the local municipal councils which are financially autonomous and have their own administrative and territorial policies.

ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

The changes in the library sphere have been accompanied by many restrictions resulting from the severe economic crises in which the country currently finds itself. This has led to substantial cuts in the information resources of libraries, as well as to their reduced potential to introduce new information technologies.

— Ministry of Culture Open Society Fund — Sofia, Bulgaria. Preface to *Building and Development of a National Library Information Network (NALIN) 1993 Draft (p. 7).*

The state is still the principal source of financing. The Ministry of Culture directly finances the National Library, while all other libraries are financed through their respective institutions and/or regional and municipal councils. A private sector has not yet developed, and the few wealthy Bulgarian citizens who could provide significant gifts to libraries do not. Director Alexandra Dipchikova of the National Library noted, "Charitable donations from private citizens are subject to taxation. Thus there is no financial incentive for individuals to assist libraries. The legislature is considering this at the moment."

DECENTRALIZATION

Political division has meant decentralization of Bulgaria's research libraries. The National Library is subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, the authorized body responsible for the policy of the state concerning libraries in the country. There is a Library Department within the Ministry, but research libraries which include university and other institutions of higher learning and special libraries report directly to their respective institutions. Regional libraries (also called Universal Research Libraries-URL) are subordinated to the municipal councils. Of the approximately 8,854 libraries in Bulgaria, there are 626 research libraries consisting of one national library, 28 libraries at higher educational institutions, 570 special libraries, and 27 regional libraries. The remaining 8,228 libraries are public. In addition to these officially recognized libraries, over 200 monastic libraries exist independently of any library department within the government. Responsibility for their future rests only with those in the position of Abbot and Metropolitan of the church.

In 1990, the Union of Librarians and Information Officers (ULISO) was established with the following objectives:

- To raise the professional status of library and information specialists in Bulgaria
- To reconsider the contacts between libraries in the changing society, in searching for mutual interests and in meeting readers' basic needs.
- To define the place and role of the library and information associations in pursuing a national library and information policy.

In 1993, an expert library council, the Council of Directors, was formed.

> *The Council is organized around the five big research libraries and acts as an advisory body to the Ministry. The Council includes the National Library, the Medical Library, the Agricultural Library, the Technological Academy of Sciences, and the University Library. No right of administrative decisions exists. Rather the Council exercises cooperative influence around the core library functions—acquisitions, cataloguing, reference work, circulation and interlibrary loan. Its objective is to deal with large scale library issues that focus on these core library functions for all libraries in the country.*
>
> — Dr. Dipchikova, Director of the National Library

The most significant challenge resulting from the political change is a highly centralized library system that has no mission. Libraries are, for the first time, being asked to define their mission and purpose. The intervening years since 1989 have shown that decentralizing library activity has proven to be a mistake, while the absence of a national program or plan has been

detrimental. Although inefficient and artificially created libraries have disappeared, the lack of a coordinating vision from the government has begun to splinter the Bulgarian library system's centralized structures. The motivation for decentralization stems from a desire for a new and free library system, but a new mission is difficult to articulate for a country never before responsible for its own structure and planning. The last two years have made it clear that a highly centralized, organizational structure would be advantageous in bringing about changes rapidly, efficiently, uniformly, and equitably among its libraries. According to Director Dipchikova, "The National Library is attempting to articulate a new philosophy and a new purpose outside the political arena. The Library has more quickly made the transition to a democratic philosophy than the country has."

SAINTS CYRIL & METHODIUS NATIONAL LIBRARY, SOFIA

Sofia is the present day capital of Bulgaria and home to its most extensive library collections. The Saints Cyril & Methodius National Library, founded as an open public library in 1878, is the only national library for the Republic of Bulgaria. The Publications Depository Act of 1897 ensures that the library receives, on legal deposit, all Bulgarian books and periodicals. In 1953, the library moved into its current building, which is now overwhelmed by 6.6 million volumes representing materials from the eleventh century to the present. The library employs 300 persons who in 1993 provided service to 25,000 readers with 872,594 items circulating. All materials circulate except for rare books, manuscripts, periodicals, and restored materials.

Saints Cyril & Methodius National Library, 1994.

The National Library is responsible for publishing the national bibliography, setting the cataloging and classification rules, and housing the national union catalogs of foreign books and periodicals received in the major Bulgarian libraries. The National Library has used the Universal Decimal Classification or the national bibliography since it was automated in 1992, and to date utilizes 30 IBM PC's. While the union catalog and the national bibliography are online, electronic access to collections is currently unavailable. The National Library is Bulgaria's only automated library and plans to someday provide bibliographic access to its own and other collections. Funding and planning for this long-term project have taken place through the Open Society Fund (OSF). [NOTE: The OSF was established by George Soros on the eve of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. A network of Open Society Clubs was established in Bulgaria in 1992 to support the movement of democracy in Bulgaria and economic reforms and a market-oriented economy.The society has been instrumental in providing for reforms in Bulgarian universities, libraries, and in the teaching of foreign languages. It was also the impetus and the funding source for the NALIN Project and continues to be an aggressive participant in the rearticulation of the library system.]

In 1956, the library established a chemical laboratory which today functions as a limited preservation facility and program. The facility employs 20 full-time staff, plus one chemist and one microbiologist. Seven rooms are devoted to the various functions subsumed under preservation, while the bulk of the activity is devoted to the conservation of paper materials and includes aqueous deacidification, bleaching, washing, paper mending, lamination, and fumigation. Although aware of Wei T'o, this institution has never heard of mass deacidification, and in neither case is there access to suppliers, money, or training to implement these treatments.

There has been no conservation binding done in the National Library for over 75 years. This year one apprentice was sent to Switzerland for a three-week training program for basic binding. In such an isolated environment many years will elapse before reaching the necessary level of knowledge and execution to address the binding needs of the collection.

The most significant conservation problem is that of infestation and contamination of new materials, due primarily to how materials come to the collection. Beyond the volumes received on deposit, acquisition often means donations from private libraries, abandoned or closed libraries, individuals in small villages, third world countries, or from the many collections buried underground during the wars and only now being unearthed. The physical condition of these volumes introduces preservation problems beyond the expected wear associated with usage. Approximately 45% of the paper collection is embrittled, and librarians decide materials to be treated based on historical significance to the collection, a quota system, and the reality of limited preservation options.

Treatment is further complicated by the nonavailability of archival quality products in Bulgaria. Small supplies of various materials (such as Japanese paper, Filmoplast, and Hollinger boxes) are left over from 1984 when the head of the conservation lab attended a conference in Germany.

The library does have a microfilming unit which concentrates on reformatting all Bulgarian manuscripts, newspapers, and periodicals from the 18th through the 20th centuries. Rare book microfilms are securely stored with rare books and manuscripts, while microfilm of newspapers are stored in a separate cage in the stacks. The unit does film manuscripts and rare books from other libraries upon demand; however, this has all but disappeared in the current economic and political climate. A consequence of this cooperative endeavor is an extensive array of microfilm collections of unique materials across the country. Unfortunately, no national bibliographic access exists because there is no equivalent to a union catalog of microfilm masters. Local inventory lists exist for master microfilms, but they provide only the manuscript number with no descriptive cataloguing.

The unit has two planetary cameras. Other than the fact that the film is polyester base safety film purchased from Germany, there is no knowledge of preservation microfilming standards. This year, for the first time, the head of the microfilming unit received a copy of one of the ANSI/AIIM standards. Although there is some common sense about care of the film, there is neither knowledge of technical standards for processing and storage nor of bibliographic standards. Without local supplies and laboratories the standards cannot be implemented. Finally, while there is no knowledge of remote storage requirements for master negatives, there are two underground facilities owned by the National Library that can be converted for this purpose.

THE IVAN VAZOV UNIVERSAL PUBLIC LIBRARY, PLOVDIV

In 1879, when Eastern Rumelia was formed, the Minister of Education approved the establishment of a national library in Plovdiv. The Ivan Vazov Library opened to the public in 1882 and in 1885 was converted to a universal public library after Eastern Rumelia was reunited with the Bulgarian Principality. As the fourth largest library in Bulgaria with depository responsibilities for the region, the library moved into its present building in 1974, housing 1.6 million volumes and 24,782 microformats, 80% of which are new acquisitions and 20% of which represent replacement copies. The library has a large periodical collection that is more heavily used than its monographic collection. Approximately 70% of all restoration focuses on pre-1944 newspapers, while 30% is devoted to monographs. Their rare collections consist of 354 manuscripts, 180 of which are Bulgarian, 48 Greek, 127 Oriental, and 5 other. They consider their rare book materials to be their most significant collection. Approximately 40,000 volumes (20,000 titles) are acquired each year with another 8,000 volumes weeded. The library's 60 exchange programs with 25 countries have dwindled in the last few years because of changing library priorities within a severe economic situation. The university community extensively uses the library for its older research materials.

The Ivan Vazov Library is the only other library to have automated part of its bibliographic functions. In 1994, the library implemented a Local Area Network (LAN). It consists of one IBM server, seven PC units, and four Panasonic printers. The equipment and software are connected to CDS/ISIS using UNESCO system version 3.0 for LAN. The LAN project was completely funded by the Open Society Fund. Currently, there is bibliographic access to 21,000 volumes.

The library has a small preservation facility of approximately 200 square feet. It employs two chemists in the restoration unit, one technician for the microfiche lab, one technician in the photo-duplication unit, and seven staff in a small bookbinding unit. There is no articulated preservation plan, but rather, a collection of activities around the restoration of rare Bulgarian imprints, monographs and serials. Priority is given to newspapers which form the bulk of the restoration and microfilming activities. Deterioration through normal use of the collection seems to be the greatest problem. Conservation activity is limited to the restoration of paper. While the range of activities resembles that of the National Library, it is more limited in scope, extent, and technical expertise. The in-house bindery unit provides hard covers for approximately 8,000 unbound or soft covered volumes in a year, with the only piece of equipment being a board shear. Since archival supplies are not available, the same binding techniques are used for modern and older books, as well as for manuscripts. The lack of conservation binding may also be related to the fact that binding units are not considered preservation activities. Thus, conservation bookbinding has not been developed.

There is an in-house microlaboratory which produces microfiche, with one technician trained for the job and performing all the work. The unit is equipped with a Pentakta A11017 Fiche Reader, Pentakta E120 Processor, and a Pentakta for oversize materials. Negatives take MA51 Polyester-Safety base film (0.18 MA51 dgr 108 100F 10.5 x 14.8 cm 2812), purchased from the German Democratic Republic, and positives take MK71. The unit functions primarily as a replacement service for lost volumes, gaps in the collection, and items too damaged to be repaired. Approximately 25,000 single-generation fiche, either positive or negative, are produced. There is no list of microfilm or microfiche masters held by the Library. Fiche are stored without sleeves in metal cabinets without support. There is no knowledge of ANSI/AIIM standards or the concept of preservation microfilming.

The P. R. SLAVEIKOV PUBLIC LIBRARY, VELIKO TURNOVO

The city of Veliko Turnovo is home to five reading libraries, 15 school libraries (from elementary to the 8th-grade), three academic libraries (university, military, and medical), the Library of the Metropolitan, and the public library. The P. R. Slaveikov Public Library was founded in 1889, and from 1921 to 1944 it served as a depository library. It has a regular reader base of approximately 7,000 users per year and houses a modest collection of 15,540 older volumes, 15 manuscripts, and 1,090 early printed books. The open reading rooms provide an additional 80,000 volumes, while new acquisitions average 500,000 volumes per year. Last year 27,000 volumes were transferred to remote storage to accommodate growth. The seven floors of stacks are extremely well maintained, spacious and with low lighting levels. The library owns 100 microfilms which were purchased to fill collection gaps. Of the microfilm, 15 are master negatives of the Slaveikov Library manuscripts, and none meet current preservation standards.

Prior to 1989 the library participated in the national preservation quota system, yet no preservation program or activity of any sort exists. The quota system allowed for the microfilming and restoration of its manuscripts and some small binding activities at a local state binder.

THE CYRIL & METHODIUS UNIVERSITY OF VELIKO TURNOVO, LIBRARY SCIENCE PROGRAM

The Cyril & Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo was founded in 1963 as a pedagogical institute and became an official university in 1971. The university library houses 320,536 volumes, 287,350 titles, 115 manuscripts, and 483 other formats. Annual circulation is about 2,017 volumes. Twenty-three staff members, including five librarians, provide service to approximately 6,000 users. Each branch library is completely decentralized, and librarians are responsible for acquisitions, bibliography, and selection for preservation. There is no formal relationship between the university and the Slaveikov Library. As in Plovdiv, students make extensive use of the library because of its holdings of older imprints.

Prior to 1954 there was nothing such as library science education in all of Bulgaria. Since 1977 single course offerings were established at the university and available to students in the fifth year of study. While a student could add classes in bibliography, bibliology (history of the book), or conservation, the courses were offered sporadically, with no formal certification. In 1992 the university received permission to add a masters degree program in library science. Presently, 13 students are enrolled, and the first class will graduate in 1995.

Several problems have arisen in the new program and its curriculum. First, there is no library faculty. Professors in other disciplines with interests in very specific aspects of library science, most typically intellectual history or bibliography, teach the library science courses. Second, English is not a requirement, making access to the current professional literature almost impossible. Third, no current bibliographies exist. What literature students have avail-

able to them is in Russian, Marxist in nature, and from the 1950s. Fourth, the program reflects no knowledge of the profession in other countries. Finally, there is no resident expertise either in preservation administration or in conservation. Moreover, the University does not have a preservation lab, thus making hands-on work out of the question.

THE METROPOLITAN LIBRARY

The Metropolitan Library in Veliko Turnovo, one of the oldest extant religious libraries outside a monastery, was founded in 1870. The library houses 22,000 volumes and 41 manuscripts, with approximately 2,500 volumes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that are unique from any other library holdings in Bulgaria. Many of the volumes were secretly bought and/or donated during the Soviet regime. There is one part-time librarian who has inventoried the collection, but no preservation or conservation activity. While she recognizes the need to preserve the collection, she lacks an understanding of how to do so.

In addition to the library in Veliko Turnovo, there are over 200 extant monastic libraries with unique collections that fall under this jurisdiction. A half-century of religious repression has resulted not only in the loss of a lived tradition but also in the loss of its intellectual record. The preservation of materials in the monastic libraries would provide access to two millennia of written tradition crucial to the future of the Orthodox faith. But the libraries have been all but abandoned as architectural problems have forced many monasteries to close. In such neglected conditions, assessment and/or relocation of the collections may be essential before the structures collapse and collections are severely damaged.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The Political Situation

The Bulgarian political structure cannot make preservation a priority at this time. Indeed, it cannot yet make libraries a priority. Fortunately, libraries and organizations are free and autonomous in their decision-making and do not need approval from the government to initiate their own projects. In this regard the political climate is receptive to cooperative projects with other countries. Of course, the current economic strain will have an effect on how much can be done initially, but this should not deter or prevent planning and organizing for an improved economic situation.

The Library Organization

Bulgarian libraries suffer from inexperience in democracy, priority setting, management, and implementation, but they are receptive to reorganization at all levels. Bulgarian libraries and academic institutions are ready for reform, modernization, and leadership. The centralized structure of the National Library is critical and can be utilized to correct the uneven levels of expertise and knowledge throughout the library system and within the profession, as well as

redefine its meaning and mission. The National Library and the Council of Directors are willing to take on the responsibility for planning a national preservation program.

There are different points of view regarding centralization and decentralization. Smaller libraries believe that a decentralized model would ensure the equitable dissemination of information, training, and material resources among libraries, as well as hasten the reforms and reorganization of libraries and profession. Clearly, the issue of decentralized and centralized library programs is complicated, but the past three years suggest that decentralization would be detrimental to progress and advancement.

Libraries and the Profession

The most significant problems are the lag in the development of libraries and the profession, gaps and uneven levels of knowledge and expertise within the profession, and nonexistent material resources. These problems exist because of Bulgaria's forced isolation from the West, but with Bulgaria's borders now open, it is newly possible to obtain information from Western resources.

The future of librarianship is in peril because no new blood is revitalizing the profession. Moreover, very few librarians speak English, making it difficult for them to absorb available information. Assistance is required to help reform library education in Bulgaria.

Preservation

The unified library system model had something like a national preservation program through its quota system. A new version of this can be reintroduced. Resident expertise at the National Library needs to be upgraded by introducing current theory, techniques, equipment, and archival supplies. Once this is done, the National Library can reintroduce a national preservation program, workshops, apprenticeships, and internships.

Preservation has not been included in the agenda of the Council of Directors as a core library function, but the OSF and National Library have agreed to include it on the agenda for the next Council meeting. While an online bibliographic environment is not yet a reality for Bulgarian libraries, it will be. Access to preserved materials is essential, and preservation and access issues must be tied to this project.

The material resources, facilities and technical equipment of Bulgarian libraries are lagging by 50 years. Conservation priorities have typically been based on the availability of material resources. Bulgarian collection preservation priorities have focused on rare books, manuscripts, Bulgarian newspapers, and single-sheet items such as maps and photographs. The Bulgarian preservation repertoire must be expanded to provide for other preservation options, i.e., Wei T'o, mass deacidification, encapsulation, and so forth.

Collections

Since many libraries function as depositories, there is little benefit in designing a national preservation program among duplicate collections. Focusing on the libraries identified in this report, both the ones visited and those referenced, is an adequate start to guarantee representation of the learned tradition of the country.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In *Building and Development of a National Library Information Network* (p. 17), Bulgarian libraries have identified the following directions for the future:

- The need for a conceptual vision of library system priorities, to be reflected in adequate programs and strategic plans.
- The provision of the financial resources necessary for the development of libraries, as well as the creation of effective and flexible models of financing.
- The accelerated introduction of automated technologies.
- The expansion of coordination among libraries.
- The broadening of material and technical facilities, with a view to preserving library collections while ensuring the highest quality of services to the libraries.

The Commission on Preservation and Access
1400 16th Street, NW Suite 740
Washington, DC 20036-2217
Phone (202) 939-3400 • FAX (202) 939-3407